

144 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S
HISTORY

For protection against invasion or rebellion
the country
depended on the militia : ' the only army
which the law
recognised '.* Macaulay dwells at length on
its popularity.
Its full strength was supposed to be 130,000
men, but they
were drilled only for fourteen days in the year
at most, and
in reality much less frequently, and were
undisciplined as
well as unexercised. Against rebellion they
were prac-
tically useless : 4,000 of them were routed by
Monmouth
at Axniinster and many deserted to him.² At
Sedgemoor
these deserters, still wearing their red-and-
yellow uniforms,³
were conspicuous in the ranks of the rebels.
After Mon-
mouth's rebellion it had been admitted that
the militia
was not in a satisfactory state, and on
November 12, 1685,
Parliament resolved that a bill should be
brought in to
make it more efficient.⁴ But in reality
the resolution
was directed against the continuance of the
standing army
which James insisted on maintaining after
the rebellion
had been suppressed. That it would have
been followed
by any effective reforms is improbable, and as
James never
let Parliament meet again after the
prorogation of Nov-
ember 20 no such bill was ever introduced.
When there was a threat of invasion the
militia was full
of zeal. The men called out in 1690 and 1692
assembled
in thousands at the shortest possible notice
and were eager

to fight the French.⁵ ' No man accustomed to war/ says Macaulay, could doubt that the trained soldiers of Louis XIV could easily have scattered three times their number of militia men. But the average Member of Parliament knew nothing of war, and believed, to use Macaulay's phrase, * the spirit of the English people was such that

¹i, 282 (iii). 211, 570 (v).

⁸II, 582 (v). 411, 686 (vi),

⁵IV, 1899-2900 (xvi) ; V, 2176 (xviii).